

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28 April 2010, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Pratt (Chairman); Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Copping, Crowther, De-Lara-Bond, Ms Dean, Malcolm Doody, Michael Doody, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Harris, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Kirton, Mrs Knight, MacKay, Mrs McFarland, Mobbs, Pittarello, Rhead, Shilton, Mrs Tyrrell, Vincett, Ms Weed, and Wilkinson.

74. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Boad, Davies, Hatfield, Mrs Mellor, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Scarrott and White.

75. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 24 February 2010, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman.

76. **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(A) The Chairman paid tribute to former Councillor Haydn Thomas who had sadly died on 21 April 2010. Mr Thomas had been a founder member of Warwick District Council and had served as a Councillor for just under 20 years as a member for the Kenilworth Abbey Ward. He had been Chairman of the District Council in 2001/2.

The Chairman also referred to the death of Mrs Sally Hatfield, late wife of Councillor John Hatfield.

The Council then stood for a few moments as a mark of respect to former Councillor Thomas and Mrs Hatfield.

Following this, Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Vincett, Coker and Crowther all paid tribute to former Councillor Haydn Thomas in recognition of the contribution he had made to the district and the work of the Council.

77. **MEMORIALS AND PETITIONS**

The Council received the following petition which had been sponsored by Councillor Mrs E Higgins:

"We the undersigned petition Warwick District Council to involve itself in negotiations to ensure a secure future for the East Gate of Warwick as part of the heritage of our County Town, and if necessary to make financial arrangements of a permanent or interim nature, including the possibility of purchase to enable the Council to achieve this end."

On behalf of the petitioners, Mr John Walker addressed the Council in respect of the issues referred to in the petition.

78. **QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 7 (2)**

(A) From Councillor J Barrott to Councillor Mrs M Grainger, Housing and Property Portfolio Holder.

“We very much welcome the news received last month from the Housing Minister John Healy, that he has changed the current HRA subsidy system of funding council houses in 177 local authorities.

The deal will increase, by at least ten percent, the money available in every council for maintaining and managing their homes. Nationally it will create the funding capacity to build over 10,000 new council houses a year.

Following this news, will the Housing Portfolio holder tell us how much funding Warwick District will now have available and how it will be distributed in order to meet the criteria outlined by the Housing Minister?”

Councillor Mrs Grainger replied:

“On 25 March the Government published ‘Council Housing: a real future.’ This prospectus is a consultation document and represents the Government’s latest proposal for the reform of the Council Housing Finance system. Responses from local authorities due by the closing date of 6 July.

Essentially, the proposal is an offer to local authorities, (LAs), to take the opportunity to ‘buy’ themselves out of the current housing subsidy system and become self financing in the future.

CLG engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, (PwC), to develop ‘notional’ business plans for all stock retaining LAs. These use current, 2010/11, HRA subsidy figures updated with any new assumptions identified in the prospectus.

Based on these notional assumptions we would be required to ‘take on’ in region of up to circa £139m of debt in order to buy ourselves out of the current subsidy system and it is estimated we would be able to repay within 30 years.

Analysis by Trowers and Hamlins shows that in terms of debt, Warwick is within the top 18 per cent of authorities taking on the greatest amount of debt (31st out of 172 authorities – 1 being the highest additional debt). For instance Rugby are estimated to take on £68m, Nuneaton and Bedworth £66m and North Warwickshire £58m.

Within the Business Plan assumptions there are proposals to use some of our borrowing to build new homes. Any new build will also be dependent upon securing Homes and Communities Agency grant funding.

The implications for WDC are quite far reaching. A considerable amount of work needs to be carried out on the ‘notional’ business plans produced by PwC. Also, a new 30 year business plan for WDC needs to be produced using

'real' figures for rental income, expenditure and inflation assumptions, rather than the notional model used in the past.

It is extremely important to note that these proposals are not firm and final figures. They are explicitly stated as being subject to confirmation as part of the next national Comprehensive Spending Review, both in terms of the totality of the settlement and the individual assumptions behind the proposals.

The Prospectus sets out no definite timetable for reform. It anticipates that a substantial amount of work will be required to put self financing in place and the Government simply 'proposes to work towards voluntary implementation from 2011/12, subject to confirmation in the next Spending Review.'

As responses are due by 6th July, it is proposed to bring a detailed report for consideration to the June Executive. This will include a detailed assessment of how much additional funding will be available for the Council to manage, maintain and deliver major repairs."

In a supplementary question, Councillor Barrott asked:

"You are saying in your response that you are going to give a report to the June Executive and there was a Housing Self-Financing Working Party that was set up some time ago, but it has never met. This seems to be the opportunity to re-invigorate that working party, so that we can have some cross party working on this subject."

In reply, Councillor Mrs Grainger said:

"Yes it will be going to the June Executive because it will be this Council's response. It is such an important issue that it is important that we have the Council's agreement and backing, rather than it just being a party response. I quite agree that re-forming the Working Party would be a good idea and I will speak to the Head of Service to get that arranged so that a meeting is held before the June Executive so that you will have had some input in the discussion."

(B) From Councillor A Wilkinson to Councillor J Hammon, Development Portfolio Holder:

"Can the Portfolio Holder tell me what action this Council has taken in the last 12 months to attract business into the district and thereby create new jobs for local people."

Councillor Hammon replied:

"The last twelve months have been a challenging period for the national and local economy with the economic down turn and the recession. Development Services have, throughout this period, sought to attract business into the District and create new jobs for local people.

The Althorpe Enterprise Hub was officially opened for business in September 2009. The Enterprise Hub was funded by Advantage West Midlands and Warwick District Council. The Althorpe Enterprise hub is targeted at new

businesses 'start ups' with office accommodation running at 45% occupancy, which is well above the target levels. The Hub has also successfully helped Formation Media Ltd to expand out of the Hub and into new, larger premises.

The Council works closely in partnership with Business Link West Midlands, Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Co-Operative Development Association (Social Enterprise), Princes Trust and Women's Business Development Agency to deliver advice and support to people in the community who wish to start up their own business.

The Brunswick Healthy Living Centre (BHLC) officially re-opened its doors in October 2009. The Community Enterprise Officer works out of BHLC and supports other parts of the community within the district, concentrating on the areas of deprivation. As well as the business support agencies mentioned above Ian works closely in partnership with Job Centre Plus and the Local Community Forums to address unemployment issues. A local Job Club has been set up in Brunswick and a further one is planned in Lillington subject to grant approval.

In the last six months activity across all Enterprise projects has been responsible for creating 21 new jobs.

The Economic Development and Regeneration team work closely in partnership with the Warwickshire Investment Partnership to promote the District to potential investors. Over the past year the Partnership has been responsible for 13 companies either moving to, or staying within, the District. As a result 14 new jobs were created and 80 were safeguarded.

As part of this ongoing inward investment work direct dialogue is maintained with potential investors through sector events such as, the British Shopping Centres Conference, where the District was represented and discussions took place with John Lewis Partnership, Waitrose, J Sainsbury, etc. Quarterly meetings with local commercial agents are also held by the District to ensure that information is shared and that there is a proactive approach to development in the District. The Town Centre Managers and Partnerships work closely with the business community and chambers of trade to build the profile and attractiveness of the town centres. They are leading on the creation of investment brochures for the towns (Kenilworth and Leamington currently) to promote the town centres as places to do business and invest. The TCMs actively provide support for developers and agents to bring forward schemes in the town centres.

In the last 12 months the Council has progressed with its Core Strategy, and clearly when adopted this document will provide a framework for the future economic growth of the District over the next 15 years, not only in terms of identifying land for employment uses but in providing greater certainty and confidence for new businesses wishing to start up or locate in the District.

Work has also commenced on a town centre plan for Warwick which, again when adopted, will be identifying investment opportunities for the private sector to strengthen the town centre economy and provide local jobs. The town centre has many assets and much potential and the plan will hopefully provide the catalyst for this development. This has also led to the mapping of

public sector assets that could be brought forward for further commercial development and the creation of local jobs.

Considerable amount of time has been spent negotiating with Wilson Bowden to secure agreement for delivering the redevelopment of the Clarendon Arcade in Leamington, and whilst this scheme may be a few years away from opening, it will significantly boost the retail offer of the town centre creating jobs and securing existing ones in the future as Leamington maintains its position in competing with nearby centres for shoppers.

The development control process endeavours to assist prospective developers upfront and engage with them to work towards a successful outcome for their proposals, within the framework of approved planning policy. The Councillor Proposed Development Review Forum is part of this process and is a significant step forward for 2010. Priority is given to major development proposals and over 80% of these have been dealt with within the government target of 13 weeks during 09-10.

Recent examples of approved schemes with potentially significant employment contributions include a hotel on the opus land site at Wedgenock on surplus land which was part of the IBM site and the Loft theatre redevelopment at Spencer's Yard. Both are examples of schemes where amendments were negotiated to enable them to go forward with a favourable recommendation leading to a grant of planning permission."

In a supplementary question, Councillor Wilkinson asked:

"I asked this question because there appears to be no awareness within the Warwick District that there are people, young and old, who are looking for jobs that match their skills. Hard working, responsible people who may not have five GCSEs, but do have engineering skills, who would in the past have worked at AP or Fords and now, if they are lucky, get jobs stacking shelves at supermarkets. I cannot see any real effort being made by Warwick District Council to hunt out and attract companies to our towns. Will the Portfolio Holder ensure inward investment becomes a stated goal of this administration and will the Portfolio Holder see that resources are put into place to achieve this?"

In reply, Councillor Hammon said:

"I know that you are passionately concerned about employment in this district, and we have had meetings in the Althorpe Street Hub about the problems. I can assure you that we are aware of the problems regarding manufacturing industries and apprenticeships. It is a national problem and it is not just a problem in this district. We do need apprenticeships and we are following up every lead possible to get manufacturers back into this district. There are enquiries and we are luckier than most areas, but we are following up everything and I can give you the assurance that we will chase up every possibility to get manufacturing industries back and going in this area."

79. **EXECUTIVE**

It was moved by Councillor Michael Doody, duly seconded and

RESOLVED that the reports of the Executive meetings held on 17 March and 14 April 2010, be approved and adopted.

80. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Coker, duly seconded and

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Standards Committee from the meeting held on 10 February 2010, be approved and adopted.

81. **REPORT OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Falp, duly seconded and

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Regulatory Committee from the meeting held on 8 March 2010, be approved and adopted.

82. **FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Knight, duly seconded and

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee from the meeting held on 13 April 2010, be approved and adopted.

83. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Gifford, duly seconded and

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the meeting held on 13 April 2010, be approved and adopted.

84. **SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

The Council considered a report regarding a proposed approach for joint scrutiny of crime and disorder, including the scrutiny of the South Warwickshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, with Stratford District Council.

RESOLVED that

- (1) subject to the approval of the South Warwickshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Board, the Home Office be requested to amend the Order that created the Partnership to enable joint scrutiny to take place under the Police and Justice Act 2006;
- (2) subject to the Home Office approving the variation to the Order, the Council establishes a joint Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee with Stratford District Council, consisting of four members from each authority, in

accordance with the agreed Warwickshire Protocol, to undertake:

- (a) scrutiny of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, including its partnership plan and associated performance reports etc;
 - (b) scrutiny of all activity relating to crime and disorder matters which is co-ordinated/funded at district level, including:
 - Community Safety (district/borough teams).
 - Anti-Social Behaviour (district level strategy) Implementation/Delivery.
 - Community Warden Schemes.
 - The contribution of several districts/borough level services, including:
 - Environmental Services
 - Housing
 - Sports and Recreation
 - Licensing
 - Planning
 - Specific projects established and managed at a district level eg domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour initiatives, inquisitive crime.
 - Local delivery of community cohesion and counter terrorism initiatives.
 - Safer Neighbourhood Delivery; and
- (3) subject to the Home Office approval of the variation to the Order, the Council agrees to the understanding with Stratford District Council, that the joint Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee will consist of four members from each authority, the venue for the meetings would alternate between Stratford and Warwick, and Chairmen would be appointed by each authority to chair the meeting alternately.

85. **ELECTION OF THE LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17, an election took place for the Leader of the Executive 2010/11.

RESOLVED that Councillor Michael Doody be elected Leader of the Executive for 2010/11.

86. **SECTION 92, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In addition to Members who had disclosed their interest in the minutes of the Executive and committees, the following declared their interest in respect of the items as shown. Where the interest is shown with an *, the Member involved left the meeting during the discussion and voting on the item.

Subject
Execute – 14 April 2010
Minute 200 – The Great Exhibition

Person Declaring Interest
*Councillor Malcolm Doody
(personal and prejudicial:
due to family working
connections with the Royal
Show Ground)

Regulatory Committee - 8 March 2010
Minute No. 52: Suggested New 6 Month
Vehicle License For Vehicles Over 5 Years
Old

*Councillor Heath
(personal and prejudicial:
being a vehicle license
holder).

87. **COMMON SEAL**

It was

RESOLVED that the Common Seal of Warwick District Council be affixed to such deeds and documents as may be required for implementing decisions of the Council arrived at this day.

(The meeting ended at 6.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN
19 May 2010